

DSWA Dorset News

November 2024

Donkey Down, 2-3 November



When we began working on this long wall, we hoped to be able to retain some of the original build. However, as the landowner has cleared dense vegetation from what remains of the wall, it has become obvious that only a couple of sections are stable enough to remain in situ. Much of the wall has been undermined by a network of rabbit warrens. This section was meant to be retained with only the minimum of intervention. There's a large hole in the centre of the stint, so Sally and Mary decide to take out that section and hope to stabilize the wall without any collapses.





Things rarely go according to plan with old walls and so they end up taking down most of the section and rebuilding it using as much of the original stone as possible so that it ties in with the old wall.

It looks pretty good too.



Further along the wall, Tim is building a stint to tie in with another original section of wall, and also using the old stone to make the join as seamless as possible.

Meanwhile, Peter and Phyllis begin coping a newly completed section further along the wall.



Donkey Down, 16-17 November



Phyllis has calculated that we have completed 83 metres of wall at Donkey Down since we started in April. Not bad going but we haven't walled very much anywhere else this year, and we have also run two beginners' courses here.

Another section of wall needs to be dismantled, so Phyllis, Mary and Wendy get started while Sally

and I spend an hour or so barrowing stone left beside the completed stint to the area where we are now working.

Mary finds another rabbit warren. Almost the entire wall has been undermined by an extensive bunny city. No wonder much of the old wall has collapsed; there are holes everywhere.



Sally decides it's time to build a bunny lunky in the hope that the pesky critters decide to emigrate to another field. Some hope – but

you never know ...

Rob plays peek-a-boo or 'does my head look big in this?' Er, yes, you numpty.





In fact, Sally and Rob make a very nice job of their lunky and you can see, in the distance, how much of this wall we have completed. We began right at the end of the field.



'You must be joking if you think I'm going through that! I had a perfectly cosy apartment until you wretched wallers decided to make me homeless!'

Ham Hill



Geoff reckons the Butchers-Witcombe wall will be finished in the New Year. Meanwhile, another foundation trench is dug (above) and a nice curved foundation laid (left).



The Ham Hill Wednesday volunteers have also made good progress clearing bramble and dislodging stone from the south-east side of the old (1700s?) wall between Strouds and the Warren on the Plateau Meadows ...



... and they enjoy a welcome tea break. The long-term plan is to mow and scrape these areas, to reduce fertility and establish flower-rich margins beside the wall. This wall will be given some restorative TLC after the Butchers-Witcombe wall is completed.



Nature on the wall.



Geoff says: 'In addition, Paul (Ranger) has mown, the Wednesday volunteers have raked, and I have trimmed along the Strouds wall. In preparation for establishing wildflower-rich margins. Looked stunning in the afternoon sun last week.'

Faro's city walls

Keith recently spent time in Faro, the capital of the Algarve region of Portugal. He visits the area quite often and is interested in the walls.

The Romans built the original walls around the old town, then the Moors reinforced them from the 8th century, but the walls today date mostly from the 17th century.

Photo: Sonia Lopez



Although not dry stone they are interesting for the style of build and how it transferred to places around the world where the Portuguese and Spanish colonised.

Left: Keith took this photograph of a building which is walled with stone at the bottom and topped with a rendered wall.

Right: I took this photograph in Cuzco, Peru, which the Spanish colonised from the 16th century. However, as Cuzco was once the Inca



capital, there are other influences at play.



Left: This lovely arch – one of several into the old city of Faro through the city walls, is strongly influenced by Moorish architecture. Small regular stones have been embedded into the mortar.

The Pembrokeshire Coast Path



Paul used the recent half-term week to walk part of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path – 186 miles from St Dogmaels in the north to Amroth in the south. Rock formations here include Old Red Sandstone – bright red mudstones, siltstones and sandstones, together with some conglomerates and green sandstones. Carboniferous Limestone (seen in these photos) is usually light grey on weathered surfaces, although often darker on fresh surfaces. Thickness of beds is variable, and limestones may be interbedded with darker calcareous mudstones.

The Taurus Mountains, Turkey



Pete (not Peter) enjoyed a summer holiday in the Taurus Mountains, Southern Turkey. The Taurus Mountains were formed by the collision of the African and Eurasian tectonic plates. The predominant underlying rock is limestone



Drystone wall in the mountains and Pete investigating the inside of a 2000-year-old tree on Mount Taurus. He says: ‘I could climb in but decided best to hang in as venomous snakes are prevalent in this area.’ You wouldn’t get me even that far into a potential snake pit.

The Stone Trust Waller of the Month



Kyle Elfson (*Minnesota*) cofounded Walkabout Outdoor, together with Laura Molde, in 2012. We create vibrant outdoor spaces that unite home living with our natural environment. Our contemporary, naturalistic design combines diverse perennial plantings that support our local Minnesota ecosystems. By integrating custom stonework, traditional dry stone walling, and carpentry, we seek to reveal the connection between craftsmanship, art, and the natural environment.

For more information visit: <https://thestonetrust.org/november-waller-of-the-month-kyle-elfson-2/>

Upcoming events

To keep up with Branch events please visit our website: <https://dorsetdswa.org.uk/events/> and get the dates in your diary.

Sat 30th November / Sun 1st December – Donkey Down

Sat 14th December / Sun 15th December – Donkey Down

I can't go any further than this at the moment but Phyllis will be in touch with the details of the walling programme in the New Year. It won't all be Donkey Down as we'll be restoring a church wall in Langton Herring in January and February. However, there will be lots of vegetation clearing before we pick up any stone.

Please contact Phyllis (warrenphyllis@rocketmail.com) if you plan to come to any of the walling sessions above and / or require maps / directions to these sites. If anything changes Phyllis will send out the relevant information.

As ever, I welcome contributions from all members, particularly if you have been travelling and seen some interesting structures.

Carole Reeves